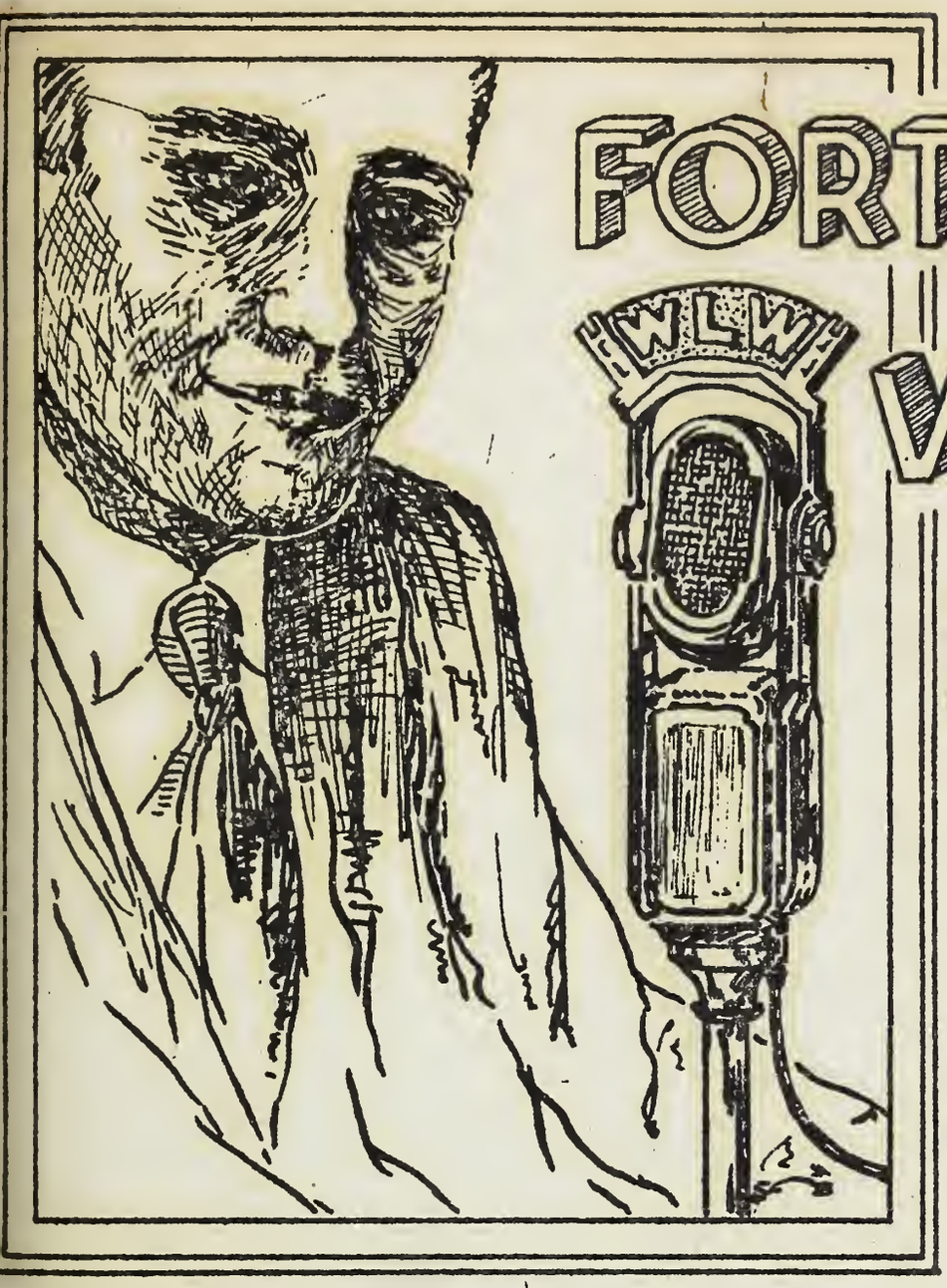

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

A Series of Dramatizations of Better Land Use

No. 132 November 2, 1940 1:15 p.m.

"ROSEN RYE"

W·L·W CINCINNATI

United States Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
Dayton · Ohio

SOUND: Martial roll of drums...

VOICE

By the powers vested in me by Nicholas II, Czar of all the Russias. I hereby sentence you, Joseph Rosen, to five years' imprisonment in Siberia.

SOUND: Martial roll of drums...

ANNOUNCER

The story of Rosen rye...132nd episode of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Off Sleeping Bear Point on the Leelanau peninsula, ten miles out in Lake Michigan, is South Manitou Island--home of Rosen rye. Here is an island of woodsmen and farmers, a self-contained and self-sustaining agricultural society. America grows millions of acres of rye in many varieties--but in Michigan, Rosen rye is king, and the cradle of Rosen Rye is tiny South Manitou Island. Not much rye is grown here, maybe not more than 120 acres--but its quality is pure, for on this isolated little island, men have learned the technique of seed farming.

ORGAN: COMING THROUGH THE RYE.

NARRATOR (over filter mike)

Come with me to South Manitou Island. Natives of Sleeping Bear Point say it sure is the End of Nowhere. Three miles one way, four the other. About eighty people on it. Among them are George Hutzler, and his son, Louie. I never had been there, myself, when the professor from Michigan State College went there....went there with a purpose.

PROFESSOR (fading in)

...so you see, Rosen rye can be Michigan's great crop. Let me tell you about its background.

GEORGE

All right, professor, but I don't see what background has to do with it.

PROFESSOR

The first seed was sent over here in 1909, by Joseph Rosen...he was once a student in Russia, and because he was against the Czar, he was given a prison term in Siberia. He escaped, though, and came to America...even worked as a farmhand in Michigan before entering Michigan State.

GEORGE

One of them furriners, huh?

LOUIE

A radical, I'll bet.

PROFESSOR

No, on the contrary...a brilliant scientist. He returned to Russia after the war was over, and one day, I got a sack of seed from him...it had about 2,000 kernels of rye that had been raised around Riga.

LOUIE (suspiciously)

How'd you know there was 2,000 kernels?

PROFESSOR

Because we counted them. You see, Louie, in the Field Crops Department at Michigan State we study a great many crops...crops that may mean the future of Michigan agriculture. And when we get a new crop for trial, we don't spare any pains to see just what it does.

LOUIE (suspicions allayed)

Yeah, I don't blame you. But what were they like, the kernels, I mean?

PROFESSOR

Why, they were long, plump, and bluish-green in color. I had just about enough to plant a plot the size of a horse blanket.

GEORGE

And so you expect us to make a crop out of that!

PROFESSOR

Wait a minute, now....you're good farmers.

GEORGE

We try to be.

PROFESSOR

Then let me tell you about the rise...and the fall, of Rosen rye.

GEORGE

We're listening.

PROFESSOR

We multiplied it at the experiment station. It filled long heads right out to the end, and it had a wonderful, short, stiff straw. So we sent some seeds out to farmers in 1911. It spread...yes, it spread, to nearly a million acres in Michigan.

LOUIE

How about the yield?

GEORGE

Shut up, Louie. Let the professor talk.

PROFESSOR

I was coming to that. It ordinarily doubled the yield. In some counties it replaced wheat as a regular winter crop. But...it couldn't stand mixing. The moment that foreign pollen intruded, it began to lose all its characteristics. In other words, it went to pieces.

LOUIE

And that's the stuff you want us to try.

GEORGE

Shut up, Louie. The professor hasn't finished.

PROFESSOR

Just about. The state crop improvement association has found that only five percent of the Rosen up for seed is fit to certify, and...

LOUIE

...and that's the...

GEORGE

Louie!

LOUIE

Yessir.

PROFESSOR

That's why I'm here. I want to find some place where it's possible to grow absolutely pure Rosen, where the farms can act as parent farm year after year, to the seed farms on the mainland. That's why I came to South Manitou Island. Well?

GEORGE

Mister Professor, I just want to say a word or two.

NARRATOR (over filter mike)

I wasn't there, but I know the professor saw George Hutzler's thoughtful, gray eyes, his spare, sinewy form, his drooping mustache, and his pensive way of looking at you. I know he saw Louie, a shy, studious-looking boy with his father's thoughtful eyes. And I know that the professor knew that George Hutzler...

GEORGE

Sure, professor....we'll try your Rosen rye.

ORGAN: COMING THROUGH THE RYE.

NARRATOR (over filter mike)

It was a thrill for me to visit the island. Come along! the professor said. Well, we went, to see what those islanders had done with their seed breeding. From what the professor told me, after they had harvested twenty bushels to the acre compared with nine bushels of the native ryes...they invited the other six farmers into a compact to drown anybody who raised any rye but Rosen on the Island's seven farms...

SOUND: Automobile racing along highway....

PROFESSOR

Now we're getting up into the Paul Bunyan country...this is the heart of it.

RUSSELL

Paul Bunyan, and his blue ox, Babe. How they slashed over the forests!

PROFESSOR

And left deserts and soil erosion behind. Want to hear some stories about Paul Bunyan?

RUSSELL

I think I've heard them all. In fact, I've even written some. I'd much rather hear about this South Manitou Island we're heading for.

PROFESSOR

You'll see for yourself pretty soon, Russ. But those Hutzlers--father and son, and the other islanders are not only capable of maintaining, but of breeding, and improving, Rosen rye. As a matter of fact, the crop association has passed a ruling that all Rosen rye sown for certified seed hereafter must not be more than two generations removed from head-selected Island Rosen rye.

SOUND: Slamming on brakes, tires skidding...

RUSSELL

Wow! Why didn't that blamed....

PROFESSOR

Scared of my driving, Russ?

SOUND: Motor accelerates...

RUSSELL

No, but...these roads!

PROFESSOR

Remember, we've left the main highway, my reporter friend. Before long, we'll be on the boat for South Manitou. A nice island. Seven cars. No good roads. And do you know how they use their cars?

RUSSELL (with sarcasm)

For hauling ice, I suppose.

PROFESSOR

Sometimes. Not one of those cars has ever been more than four miles from its garage. But the boys like them....there's a lake in the center of the island, a big lake, a mile long. And when that lake freezes over in winter, the boys sneak the family cars down there and open them up.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

NARRATOR (filter mike)

Well, after the boat trip to the island, we finally found the Hutzler place. The road was two deep tracks through sand, with strips of logs, corduroy, here and there. Forests pressed closely upon both sides--pine, maple, beech, birch, ash, above thick underbrush. It was lonesome as all get out, back here from the water. We came to a fence, and a wire gate--the Hutzler clearing!

ORGAN: Soft and gentle behind...

NARRATOR (filter mike)

It spread before us like a carpet. Orderly fields of grain and row-crops, tall sweet-clover, a neat white nautical-looking cottage, a small fenced orchard and garden with a border bed of roses and petunias--all clear-cut, with a cleanness and a brightness about it that you find only near great bodies of water on a clear fall day.

ORGAN: Out abruptly.

RUSSELL

You George Hutzler?

GEORGE

I am.

RUSSELL (embarrassed)

I saw your rye at Chicago last winter.

GEORGE (shouting)

Louie!

LOUIE (fading in)

Yeah, dad. Oh, hello professor!

SOUND: Mingled greetings and introductions...

LOUIE

Sure, dad, you remember the professor. He's the man what give us the first Rosen seed.

GEORGE

Of course. Have you fed?

RUSSELL

Yes, we brought a lunch, and ate it early, on the boat.

PROFESSOR

I should have known you'd have fixed a meal for us, George.

GEORGE

We would like to have fed you. Well, if it's rye you want to see, we got it. Out back.

ORGAN: Brief Bridge denoting short space of time.

GEORGE

This is it.

PROFESSOR

I'm amazed, and I may say, gratified, at your success, especially with the experimental hand-crosses.

GEORGE

We try to farm right. Let's go on to the next field.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE

LOUIE

The professor's a pretty smart guy, isn't he?

RUSSELL

I'll say he is. He's one of these guys that makes a hobby of land use.

LOUIE

What'ya mean, land use?

RUSSELL

Putting every acre to its best use. For instance, if that land over there isn't gentle enough for crops, put it in pasture or woodlands, and if...

LOUIE

Oh, I get it. We've been doing that on South Manitou Island for ever so long a time. Haven't we, Dad?

GEORGE

What's that?

LOUIE

I was telling him we was trying to farm right.

GEORGE

Sure we have. Some others here on the Island have done all right, too. My brother-in-law, Irvin Beck, beat us for International sweepstakes one year. And Missus Johnson, down by the shore, grows the best red kidney seed beans in the state. Now there's some talk about us taking a new sweet clover the college has... and keeping it pure. That's the spirit--work together. If you fellows can stand it, let's go up to the top of the hill...

RUSSELL (puffing)

Let's go!

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE

NARRATOR (filter mike)

There, at the top of a hill of sweet clover, we saw edges of the other farms, wrapped, like his, in woodland. He told us how his own father had cleared the first 20 acres out of the woods, and where he, George, had gone in with an ax and carved out the other 50 acres later on.

GEORGE

There she is, men--my land. Not my land, but Louie's land after I'm gone. I don't want it to ever wash away.

LOUIE

It won't ever, dad...long's I'm around.

ORGAN: Sneak in COMING THROUGH THE RYE.

GEORGE

I know it won't, Louie...because you're a true son of an old back-woodsman. That rye is a cash crop, but it's also a mighty fine blanket for the soil during the winter time. You remember that cup we got from the International, son...

LOUIE

Of course I do. It says, "George and Louis Hutzler, South Manitou Island, Michigan." Won it three times. One more time and it's ours for keeps.

GEORGE

That cup means a lot. But it means a lot more to know that you're handling your land to keep it for those who come after. It makes you feel like you amount to something.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of the origin, and the development of Rosen Rye--Michigan's favorite, and the true story of father and son, George and Louis Hutzler. And now, once again we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thanks, _____. It's generally agreed that Rosen rye is the best variety in Michigan, as well as most of the other states in this vicinity, but I should warn you that...

ANNOUNCER

A warning, Ewing? Hallowe'en has already come and gone.

JONES

This warning isn't as dramatic as pushing over fences, or throwing rocks against lamp-posts, it's just that the hob-goblins will get you if you don't watch out and...

ANNOUNCER

....and get the bulletin on cover crops. And the bulletin on cover crops may be obtained by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

JONES

Yes, the bulletin on cover crops may be obtained by sending a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, at Dayton. But that wasn't my warning. Rye after rye programs, without proper rotation with leguminous crops or sufficient fertilizers, have made lands unsuited to production of many crops. It should be remembered that rye is a supplementary crop, filling its place in a rotation in which alfalfa, the clovers, sweet clover, or winter vetch, with some intertilled crop, play the leading parts.

ANNOUNCER

But by and large, rye is one of the leading winter cover crops in the Ohio Valley, isn't it?

JONES

Yes, but just a minute. I see Ed Mason lounging over there in the corner. Let's gang up on him...Ed, come over here.....you've seen the cover crops bulletin, haven't you?

MASON

Yes, I have. So what?

JONES

So what!

ANNOUNCER

So what, the man says.

MASON

I'll tell you so what. AD LIB ONE MINUTE ON BULLETIN.

JONES

Well, Ed, that's a real endorsement, and thanks. Now, _____ a minute ago you said that rye was one of the leading winter cover crops in the Ohio Valley. It's one of the best all-round cover crops in the Corn Belt, and it's more commonly used than any other grass or grain as a winter cover. Rye is easy to grow, it has a wide range of adaptability, it germinates readily, and makes a complete cover quickly. Its stolling characteristic is valuable. On fertile soils, it makes a rapid, dense growth, and will produce a fairly satisfactory cover on thin soils. Rye is winter hardy, is seldom damaged by cold weather, it will furnish large quantities of organic matter, it absorbs some of the soil nitrates, and tends to prevent leaching during the winter. In other words, rye is a mighty fine cover crop to hold this land of ours.

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

JONES (on cue)

Remember, if you want the illustrated bulletin on cover crops, just send a letter or a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. This is Ewing Jones, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture...and goodbye until next week at this same time, when we bring you another chapter of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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